

The Irony of Girls in the Boy Scouts: Less Beloved Toxic Masculinity for Women

by Christopher DeGroot



“One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman,” says Simone de Beauvoir in the famous first sentence of *The Second Sex*. The maverick tome makes a compelling case. And yet, as Camille Paglia has often noted, man’s performative burden is even greater than woman’s. For women, there is a sense of identity in their very biology, a predestined course, however onerous. From puberty on, it becomes ever more clear to women—the source of human life itself—that the body is fate, as women’s rather circumscribed history has long shown. Indeed, it’s only in the modern era—and thanks to men—that women, through the

pill, technology, and the general material edifice of civilization, have been somewhat unfettered from the natural realm, to our growing cultural confusion: for the changes have been so significant, and have happened so quickly, that we hardly know what to make of them, let alone how to decide what would be best for both sexes and their offspring.

Life is different for men. We have to prove ourselves, and so we fiercely compete to that end. While woman have a supreme biological value simply because they are women, we men must labor to become something worthwhile, and indeed, much of that is done in order to be able to win over women. Our essential difference from them is evident here. Consider the gorgeous woman who lives on my street. Seeing her get into her gleaming new Mercedes Benz, I infer that she probably has a good job, some savings, and a university degree (or else probably a rich male provider). But I perceive that, even if she did not have those things, in virtue of her beauty alone, she would still possess tremendous power, power over men: who, in their desire for her, would go out of their way to please her, in 2017 no less than in 1917. Now, I am not an ugly man, but when I walk down the street, women don't approach me asking to buy me a coffee sometime, or dinner, or whatever. No, I must achieve something to have the rank I desire in the human hierarchy.

Since, then, man's lot is uniquely performative, there have arisen certain cultural means of *making* him a man. Notice here what the old saying "be a man" really means: *become* a man, that is to say, *something better than what you are*. For on this endeavor depends the welfare of men and women alike, since without well-developed men, there are no good fathers, no thriving industries, and no state itself, leadership and defense being eminently male affairs. In a time when masculinity itself has become taboo, even though it is the source of civilization itself, the Boy Scouts has been a vital, transformative institution, because this bastion of masculine virtues has helped Americans to transmit manhood

through the generations. And yet, the Boy Scouts, in a typical stroke of naïve sentimentalism, have chosen to let girls into their ranks. Of course, conservatives have been highly critical of the “inclusion,” and the [best critique](#), perhaps, has been by my friend Anthony Esolen, who is always eloquent and wise. There is already a [war on boys](#) in America, who, like girls, as Esolen argues, need their own space in which to grow up, to become men, as it were: so that, as men, they can complement, indeed complete women. But our time, alas for us, is suffering from a general deprivation of value; for what have historically been mankind’s most important sources of meaning—the family, heterosexual love, religion, culture, community, dignified, meaningful work—are vanishing from the West. In consequence many people, feeling exhausted and bankrupt, are zealous to create a new faith to live by.

So we now confront a great many unwitting worshipers of false gods, anxious proselytes of new idols. With great industry, they seek to make all human contexts answerable to their conceptions of “social justice” and “diversity.” These shibboleths, to be sure, get much of their impetus from something else that means to fill the awful void: status idolatry, which people use to realize their [innate need](#) for esteem. This idolatry, like virtually all of our problems, is exacerbated by the [corrupt universities](#), which, trafficking in resentment, are concerned to make men and women quite literally the same. Indeed, that is the irony of the diversity crowd: what they really oppose is diversity itself. Thus, the Boy Scouts must become the Everybody Scouts, lest the patriarchy (which women’s own mating choices [create](#)) continue to oppress bourgeois white women, who, in desperate flight from their overwhelming boredom, are the primary drivers of this sort of thing. The ordinary white woman finds a diversion in Lifetime movies. She who has intellectual pretensions strives to effect “gender equality,” in this respect as unoriginal and imitative as the sixteen year old beauty with her duck face photos on Instagram.

What nobody seems to have noticed is that the long term effect of girls being in the Boy Scouts will be that even more women, in their sexual frustration with unmanly men, will take to the perverse *Fifty Shades of Grey* stuff and to cheating on their unexciting, emasculated boyfriends and husbands. For although our enfeebled, genteel culture loathes “toxic masculinity,” it remains the greatest pleasure of women themselves. In her new book, *State of Affairs: Rethinking Infidelity*, Esther Perel [relates](#) that the amount of married women who report infidelity has increased by 40 percent since 1990, in correlation to the advance of feminism. What’s the reason for this considerable rise in adultery? The feminists asked for sensitive and caring men, the docile and deferential types who are the norm in professional and intellectual circles. Now women have them, and they are disgusted. So they are cheating. “We are sick and tired of all these nice, professional men!” cry the ladies in their eternal oppression. “Down with them! Up with bad boys!” For many women, equality is evidently an ironic game. The more of it they get in politics and the workplace, the more they seek the opposite in *eros*. Nature has made woman of greater value than man, so there is something in her that thinks: “Triumph over my will; make me your equal thereby.” Indeed, it is rising female equality itself that augments women’s love of bad boys, of BDSM and of male psychopaths.

In a recent article in *First Things*, the sociologist Mark Regnerus tells the representative [tale of Nina](#).

For the typical American woman, the route to the altar is becoming littered with failed relationships and wasted years. Take Nina, a twenty-five-year-old woman my team interviewed in Denver. Petite, attractive, and faring well professionally in her position with an insurance company, Nina was nevertheless struggling when it came to relationships. She had a history of putting men she valued as confidantes in the “friend zone.” With these men, a sexual relationship seemed too risky. If it went awry,

she'd lose not only a potential mate but also a valued friend. On the other hand, if she didn't know the man well, she was willing to have casual sex while hoping for something more.

After several years, this approach had taken its toll: an abortion, depression, and a string of failed relationships. Nina now believed that a marriage ought to begin as a friendship, and for the first time in years, she had someone in particular—David—in mind. Though she had been raised by liberal parents to be open-minded about sex and wary of traditional household roles, she had come to see things differently. She was blunt: "I'm dead serious. . . . I would marry him, I would raise his kids, raise a family."

Why does Nina, like so many women today, both young and old, put certain men in "the friend zone" while having "casual sex" with others? Why do the latter succeed while the former fail? Because the lucky few exude the confidence and charisma, the masculine prowess Nina craves. In short, they are manly, while the others are mere nice guys, that is to say, as women perceive them, weak and boring. Of course, the feminized academy, so influential on the general culture, gives men to understand that women want kind, decent, good men. On the contrary, many if not most Western women have become rather like foreign nations: they respond best to superior power, and hence the countless men who muse: "I was so good to her, but now she's sleeping with a jerk! *What* did I do wrong?" Answer, poor player: you bought into liberal sentimentalism. Nor can your illusion, now dripping with tears, cover the expensive divorce attorney.

Regarding a scholarly inquiry into married couples, Regnerus comments, "Despite the transactional way of framing the problem, the researchers harbored a fond hope: that more equal relationships would also be more erotic ones. So, do men who do a greater share of the housework enjoy more sex? No. In

fact, they're penalized in the bedroom." More bad news for human happiness, which, even in 2017, still demands its allotment of non-vain days under the sun. The feminists, leaning into the human soul Sheryl-Sandberg-style, have commanded that a man shall want to dust the furniture and wax the floor, and yet now he's a turn off. What's a vexed wife to do? Many become unfaithful.

Indoctrinated as they now are with all manner of sentimental illusions, young men in particular need to learn what women really want from them. Here Ernest Hemingway's short story, "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," which might aptly be called "What Women Really Want," is wonderful reading. As his facetious name implies, Francis Macomber, like most contemporary Western men, is a weak fellow, fit to be manipulated and controlled by his wife Margaret, who is much stronger in mind and will than him, as women often are in regard to men, amply compensating for their physical weakness with preternaturally adroit dissimulation and cunning: so subtle that few men can ever perceive it, although women themselves know it only too well (hence their frequent preference for male "friends," especially gay ones). While on vacation in Africa, the couple goes on a safari with an alpha male indeed—a literal lion hunter—whose courage among the lions and other beasts stands in humiliating contrast to the cowardly Francis, who has no such chops and panics when a wounded lion rushes at him. Margaret, acting on her [determining hypergamy](#), is smitten and soon sleeps with the heroic Robert Wilson, whose superiority she had earlier rewarded with a kiss. Now Francis feels even worse, betrayed and impotent. At length, however, he overcomes his weakness as the two men continue to hunt, and feeling manly at last, he decides to leave Margaret. Whereupon she in her wicked guile decides that Francis must "accidentally" die. And so he does, his wife shooting him. The alpha hunter Wilson, though not an abettor, cynically plays along with her subsequent false account, nor is he troubled, believing the brutal turn of

events is all in the nature of things. The terribly ironic title refers to the brief moments when Francis was a real man (finally having self-mastery and refusing to let Margaret dominate him)—that is, just before his wife killed him, since she had resolved to punish him for his newfound freedom. If only he had been a real man all along, like Robert Wilson—that is the ultimate lesson, perhaps, of this dark fiction.

The second book of Karl Ove Knausgaard's *My Struggle* is also well-worth reading with respect to understanding the true complexity of male-female relations, on which D.H. Lawrence—naturally reviled by feminists—is the great modern literary authority. Throughout that autobiographical novel, Karl Ove is horribly mistreated, unconsciously tested time and time again by his moody and difficult wife. Like a student who never does his homework, he continually fails these tests. Tellingly, he does not even understand what she is doing. Finally, in his rage, he tells her that he is going to do whatever he wants from now on, and oh well if she doesn't like it. Her unreasonable behavior ceases at once, because the woman's (unstated) wish has finally been granted: she has seen the fierce manly backbone she'd been craving, deep down, all along. Like most educated men, Karl Ove, a natural nice guy, as the book makes clear, needed to overcome the foolish liberal sentimentalism he'd imbibed in his youth. At least he did so. Most men do not. They never recognize their self-defeating "niceness" in regard to women. As Montaigne said of love, "it must have sting in it." Most men know nothing of the necessary and inevitable power struggle between men and women. Nor do most feminists, to be sure.

For women, the appeal of the sort of men winningly represented in these stories is fundamentally primordial. Tough, bold and principled, they show that they are worthy, that they are *men*, what women really want. If the Boy Scouts want women to get what they want—always so important, as every married man knows!—they will once again make it a boys club.

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